

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 116237
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 116237

FOL MANAGUA 2068 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO GUATEMALA SAN JOSE
SAN SALVADOR TEGUCIGALPA MAY 4, 1978 REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2068

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, NU
SUBJECT: SOMOZA'S INITIATIVES: REPORT CARD

REF: A) MANAGUA 0926, B) MANAGUA 1051, C) MANAGUA 1217,
D) MANAGUA 1734, E) MANAGUA 1736, F) MANAGUA 1776

SUMMARY: DESPITE THE OPPOSITION'S REJECTION OR DISMISSAL OF ALL THE
INITIATIVES PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 26, THERE HAS BEEN
FURTHER ACTION ON SOME OF THE INITIATIVES (ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION,
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ALL AVAILABLE INFORMATION INDICATES THAT HIS PARTY (PLN) AND THE
NATIONAL GUARD (GN) BELIEVE HIM AND HAVE ACCEPTED THAT EVENTUALITY.

THE STILL AMORPHOUS OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, IS ACUTELY AWARE OF PAST SOMOZA-FAMILY MACHINATIONS AND POWER PLAYS AND, THEREFORE, IS INCREDULOUS AND SHOW ALL INDICATIONS OF REMAINING SO UNTIL THERE IS TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF SOME SURRENDER OF SOMOZA'S CONTROL OF THE LEVERS OF POWER. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE FEBRUARY 26 INITIATIVES HAVE HAD LITTLE

IMPACT OF THE OPPOSITION ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

2. CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION-PRESIDENT SOMTYA ANNOUNCED HE WOULD ESTABLISH A COMMISSION OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS TO REVIEW THE INVESTIGATORY PROCEEDINGS. HE SUBSEQUENTLY INVITED THE INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSN. (IAPA) TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO PERFORM A SIMILAR ROLE (REF B). THE IAPA REJECTED THE INVITATION, AND WHEN SOMOZA FINALLY NAMED THE COMMISSION IN APRIL, THE MAJORITY DECLINED TO SERVE (REF D). LATER, PERHAPS ENCOURAGED BY AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT TO SOMOZA THAT A POSSIBILITY EXISTS FOR EXTRADITION FROM THE U.S. OF ONE OF THE PRINCIPALS IMPLICATED BY TESTIMONY IN THE ASSASSINATION, AN EXTRADITION PROCEEDING WAS INITIATED (REF D). THE REQUEST, WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE, MAY PRESENT PROBLEMS FOR USG AS THE EVIDENCE IS SHAKY AND THE CASE MAY FALL OUTSIDE THE TERMS OF THE TREATY (CONSPIRACY GREATER THAN PARTICIPATION). FOR THE MOMENT, THE COMMISSION INITIATIVE APPEARS TO HAVE DIED STILLBORN, DESPITE THE STATEMENT OF ITS HEAD (MINGOV MORA) THAT HE IS SURE HE RECALCITRANT MEMBERS WILL EVENTUALLY REVERSE THEIR OBJECTIONS TO SERVICE ON THE COMMISSION. AS OF THIS WRITING, 114 DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE ASSASSINATION WITHOUT ANY PROGRESS TOWARD IDENTIFICATION OF THE "INTEL-CONFIDENTIAL

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LECTUAL AUTHORS" OF THE CRIME. EVEN THOUGH THE EMOTIONAL REACTION HAS EBBED, THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE IN THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION HAS NOT ABATED AND IS UNLIKELY TO DO SO UNLESS NEW REVELATIONS OCCUR. THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE TRANSLATES DIRECTLY INTO A POPULAR DEMAND FOR THE RESIGNATION OF SOMOZA.

3. ELECTORAL REFORM- PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED A PROPOSAL TO PARTIALLY AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO FACILITATE PARTICIPATION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. THIS INITIATIVE HAS BEEN PASSED BY THE CONGRESS WITHOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE OFFICIAL CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PCN) OPPOSITION. THE PCN POSITION, WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY OTHER NON-OFFICIAL OPPOSITION PARTIES, IS THAT THE PARTIAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM DOES NOT MEET THEIR DEMAND FOR A NEW ELECTORAL MECHANISM WHICH WILL GUARANTEE FREE ELECTIONS. THE PROPOSAL HAS NOW BEEN RETURNED TO THE PRESIDENT, WHO MAY SUGGEST REVISIONS. IT WILL BE SENT BACK TO THE NEXT SESSION OF CONGRESS WHERE, IF APPROVED A SECOND TIME, IT BECOMES LAW. THERE REMAINS CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY FOR MEETING THE OPPOSITION'S CONCERNS. PRESIDENT SOMOZA MAY INITIATE FURTHER CHANGES WHEN HE SENDS THE AMENDMENTS TO THE NEXT SESSION OF THE CONGRESS; IN THE NEXT SESSION, THE CONGRESS MAY INITIATE FURTHER CHANGES; OR, IF THE REFORM IS ADOPTED AS NOW WRITTEN, THERE STILL REMAINS FLEXIBILITY WHEN THE CONGRESS BEGINS

FOLLOW-ON REVISION OF THE ELECTORAL LAW.

4. REPRESSION-PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED THAT NO LEGAL ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST PARTICIPANTS IN THE NATIONAL WORK STOPPAGE. TO A LARGE EXTENT THIS COMMITMENT HAS BEEN OBSERVED. HOWEVER, PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WHO LEFT EHRI JOBS IN SUPPORT OF THE STRIKE HAVE BEEN FIRED OR NOT REHIRED. ALSO THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW CASES OF HARASSMENT, ALBEIT LEGAL, OF LEADERS OF THE WORK STOPPAGE MOVEMENT, SUCH AS THEIR BEING FORCED TO SUBMIT TO REDTAPE REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING EXIT VISAS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL. THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM CLASHES BETWEEN THE GN OR GON SUPPORTERS AND ANTI-REGIME PROTESTORS. HOWEVER, DESPITE OPPOSITION STATEMENTS, THE INSTANCES HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW IN WHICH IT APPEARS THEGN HAS EXCEEDED SOMOZA'S ORDERS TO USE MINIMUM FORCE TO

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MAINTAIN ORDER. INVESTIGATIONS BY THE GN HAVE BEEN INITIATED IN EACH OF THESE INSTANCES OF APPARENT EXCESS. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY MORE INSTANCES OF PROTESTERS LIGHTING FIRES IN THE STREETS, ERECTING BARRICADES, THROWING BOMBS, AND THREATENING OR ATTACKING PRIVATE CITIZENS AND THEIR HOMES THAN BY THE GON AND ITS SUPPORTERS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE REPORTS OF A FEW, APPARENTLY RELATED INCIDENTS IN MANAGUA WHICH COULD CONSTITUTE PRO-GOVERNMENT COUNTER-TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

5. MINOR REFORMS - THE CONGRESS HAS APPROVED THE NEW LAW REGARDING LAND-TENANT RELATIONS AND UNDERUTILIZED LAND WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA. ONE OF THE OPPOSITION'S DEMANDS WAS FOR ABOLISHMENT OR REFORM OF THE RADIO AND TV CODE. PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 26 THAT IT WAS ALREADY UNDER STUDY BY THE CONGRESS. HE NOW APPARENTLY PLANS TO PROCEED WITH AN AMENDMENT OF THAT LAW.

6. SEVERAL OTHER SOCIAL WELFARE REFORMS WERE ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA. THESE, ACCORDING TO SOMOZA, WILL BE DEALT WITH IN THE NEXT SESSION OF CONGRESS.

7. THE OPPOSITION HAS RAISED SEVERAL DEMANDS BEYOND THE INITIATIVES ACCEPTED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA. THESE INCLUDE: DIVORCING THE GN FROM SOMOZA CONTROL; RESTRUCTURING THE GN; INDEPENDENT, HNON-POLITICAL CAREER STATUS FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND THE JUDICIAL BRANCH. SOMOZA HAS REPLIED PUBLICLY THAT HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT ALL THESE DEMANDS AS NEGOTIABLE AS A RESULT OF A DIALOGUE-BUT NOT AS PRECONDITIONS TO SUCH DISCUSSIONS.

8. THE INTENTIONS OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA IN ACCOMMODATING OPPOSITION DEMANDS HAS BEEN FURTHER TESTED BY A LIST OF DEMANDS PRESENTED BY STUDENTS OCCUPYING SCHOOLS AND OTHERS ON HUNGER STRIKES. SOMOZA FIRST MET WITH ARCHBISHOP OBANDO Y BRAVO AND ACCEDED TO ACT ON FOUR OF THE STUDENT DEMANDS PRESENTED BY OBANDO. THE STUDENTS AND HUNGER STRIKERS RESPONDED BY SAYING THEY HAD SEVEN, NOT FOUR, DEMANDS.

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SOMOZA SUBSEQUENTLY MET ON APRIL 29 WITH A PARENT GROUP SUPPORTING THE PROTESTERS AND AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE SEVEN POINTS. THIS RESULTED IN THE END OF THE HUNGER STRIKE AND SCHOOL OCCUPATIONS FOR A TWO-WEEK PERIOD WHILE THE PROTESTERS STUDY THE RESULTS OF THE AGREEMENT. THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS BY SOMOZA WERE RELEASE FROM JAIL OF ONE FSLN PRISONER WHO RECENTLY HAD GIVEN BIRTH WHILE DETAINED, THE END OF ISOLATION FOR ANOTHER TWO FSLN PRISONERS (BORGE AND JAEN), NEW IMPROVED PRISON CONDITIONS FOR FEMALE FSLN PRISONERS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS, AND A REDUCTION TO 15 DAYS (FROM 90 DAYS) CLOSURE OF A LOCAL RADIO STATION (THE 90-DAY SUSPENSION AGAINST THE SPECIFIC NEWS PROGRAM REMAINS IN EFFECT). THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S CLOSING OF THE OCCUPIED SCHOOLS HAS BEEN REVOKED.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT SOMOZA STATES HE IS GROWING TIRED OF MAKING CONCESSIONS WITHOUT ANY INDICATION OF ACCOMMODATION FROM THE POLITICAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR OPPOSITION, IN FACT HE HAS MADE FURTHER CONCESSIONS AND HAS SHOWN NO INDICATION OF APPLYING THE MILITARY AND GOVERNMENTAL FORCE AVAILABLE TO HIM TO TRY TO BREAK THE PRESSURE BEING APPLIED ON HIM BY THE OPPOSITION. MEANWHILE, THE AGGREGATED SEGMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION CONTINUE TO BE VERY RELUCTANT TO RISK JEOPARDIZING THE TENUOUS UNITY THEY NOW HAVE BY MOVING AWAY FROM THEIR POSITION OF 'NO DIALOGUE WITH SOMOZA'. THE MAJOR PROBLEM OF THE OPPOSITION IS ITS LACK OF A NEGOTIABLE SPECIFIC PROGRAM TO DISMANTLE THE SOMOZA REGIME, AND OF AN EFFECTIVE STRUCTURE WITH A UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED LEADERSHIP. SOLAUN UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 116237

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SALLY SHELTON

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 116237 SENT ACTION CARACAS MAY 6, 1978.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 116237

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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOMOZA'S INITIATIVES: REPORT CARD
TAGS: PINS, NU, (SAMOZA DEBAYLE, ANASTASIO)
To: CARACAS
Type: TE
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